

Ebbegebirge Nature Park -- Castles And Festivals In Westphalia

Did you know that more than 9 million people a year visit the southwest [Sauerland](#) to see the Ebbegebirge Nature Park, which includes the small Ebbegebirge mountain range itself?

How about making it 9 million and one? No, two, because I'll go with you.

It's simple enough to get here, as the Autobahn A45 wriggles through it. Yeah, means nothing on its own, but once you get to any part of this 777 square kilometer region you'll be mighty impressed.

The highest point of the Ebbegebirge Nature Park is the Nordhelle mountain at 663 meters above sea level. You'll find it (as if you can't see it, ha ha) in the town of [Meinerzhagen](#).

Meinerzhagen is really outstanding, and not just for its hilly landscape. The Volme River makes its appearance here, there are countless hiking trails, not to mention a bazillion winter sports spread out over Meinerzhagen's thirty-five plus villages.

One of my favorite places to see is the Magdalene Church, especially all lit up and covered with snow.

Following the Volme River around to [Kierspe](#), we're still able to enjoy the coniferous and deciduous trees of the Ebbegebirge. Kierspe is one town where you'll find one the 10 dams along this ridge of hills.

And we can't leave out seeing the 19th century distillery, the 12th century church (that's now got a partial Baroque design).

[Herscheid](#) is where the Ebbegebirge meets the Rhenish Slate Mountains. The town offers all kinds of hiking trails, biking paths, and swimming opportunities; but you can also see its 11th century Church of the Apostles, the Altena Castle Museum, a Railroad Museum, and plenty of half-timbered houses.

This is the time where we've reached the middle of our journey through the heavily wooded Ebbegebirge. Believe it or not, just about two-thirds of this large nature park area is forested.

That would explain all the beech trees, wouldn't it? ;-)

It's not all trees, though. Along the way you'll see bogs and heaths, mixed with grassland. It's a hodge-podge of landscaping, right?

Inasmuch as there are types of land, that's about how many castles you'll find in the next town of [Plettenberg](#). Schloss Grimminghausen and Schloss Brüninghaus are just two of them, yet it's the ruins Burg Schwarzenberg that I really like — and I think you will too.

Plettenberg boasts another one of the Ebbegebirge dams (the Oesterdam), and also has an old railway that'll take you back in time.

There's a lot to do in [Attendorn](#), the second to last town on our trip around the Ebbegebirge. This town of more than 30 villages was once part of the [Hanseatic League](#), and is now where you'll find the Südsauerland Museum, a 14th century *Rathaus* (Town Hall), the Church of St. John the Baptist, and the *Atta-Höhle* (one of the many caves).

Attendorn is also a town that like to seriously party. Easter is a big deal with a huge bonfire, but the *Gauklerfest* is a kid-friendly, cabaret summer event, as is the *Feuerwehrfest* with the fire department on the last weekend of June.

However, if you can only make it to one festival in Attendorn, make it the *Schützenfest* (Marksmen's Festival) on the 1st weekend of July — it kicks off with a beer tasting.

Oh, I'm so in. ;-)

With the mention of beer at Attendorn's festival, I'm going to stay here — so you're off to the Biggensee on your own. This 8.7 square kilometer lake lies totally within the center of the Ebbegebirge Nature Park, and is super popular with water sports enthusiasts that love all the swimming, sailing, and windsurfing.

One of the coolest ways to get around the lake is with boat tours that have pick-up and drop-off at five locations around it.

I guess that makes the Ebbegebirge Nature Park more than just a natural geographical location. We've caught up with nature, history, castles, and best of all, festivals. ;-)